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NORTH AMERICAN FOREST COMMISSION

THIRTY-SECOND SESSION

Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada

25 - 27 September 2023

Input to FAO Governance and FAO Strategic Planning

Suggested Actions by the Commission

The Commission is invited to encourage Members to:

- continue to actively support the Regional Forestry Commissions (RFCs) as the main instruments in forestry for linking the global and regional levels under the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31.
- develop recommendations for the Informal Regional Conference for North America (INARC), the Committee on Forestry (COFO) agenda and the programme priorities, regional, for FAO's work in forestry.
- take note of the process to develop a new strategic framework document for FAO's work in forestry between 2024 and 2031 and provide guidance, as deemed appropriate.

The Commission is invited to recommend FAO to:

- ensure that recommendations are presented to the secretariats of COFO and the Regional Conferences (RCs).
- share the recommendations of the Commission with other Regional Forestry Commissions.

Queries on the content of this document may be addressed to:

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A. INPUT TO FAO GOVERNANCE

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The 42nd Session of the FAO Conference, following the recommendation of the 166th Session of the FAO Council, endorsed the Strategic Framework 2022-31 (Strategic Framework) as a means to achieve more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems. The Conference also appreciated that the Strategic Framework is aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), stressing the role of the *four betters* (better production, better nutrition, a better environment, a better life, leaving no one behind), in achieving the 2030 Agenda and FAO's three Global Goals of Members¹.
2. The Strategic Framework defines FAO's strategic vision in terms of its contribution to transformative and structural changes at global, regional and country levels. The framework is being implemented through 20 Programme Priority Areas (PPAs), which respond directly to the recommendations of the Regional Conferences and Technical Committees.
3. The 43rd Session of the Conference held in July 2023 further strengthened these strategic directions by approving the reviewed Medium-Term Plan 2022-25 and the programme of Work and Budget 2024-25, accelerating further the progress towards the goals and objectives set in the FAO Strategic Framework and enhancing FAO's role in the quest for a world free of hunger.
4. The current document outlines opportunities for the Commission to provide inputs to FAO governance by advising on topics and agenda items for the forthcoming sessions of the Committee on Forestry (COFO) and the Informal Regional Conference for North America, as well as identifying actions for FAO's work in forestry, aligned with the four betters, the Programme Priority Areas, the Global Forest Goals (GFGs) of the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030 (UNSPF), as well as with a view to the FAO Forestry strategic planning.

II. PREPARATIONS FOR THE 27TH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON FORESTRY

5. The revised Multi-year Programme of Work of COFO (MYPOW)² continues to place a strong emphasis on the collaboration between the Regional Forestry Commissions (RFCs) and COFO and maintains the discussion with Statutory Bodies as a standing agenda item of its future sessions. During the last several sessions of COFO, this agenda item was implemented as a dialogue with heads of Statutory Bodies including the six RFCs, Silva Mediterranea, COFO Working Group on Dryland Forests and Agrosilvopastoral Systems and the Advisory Committee on Sustainable Forest Industries.
6. The collaboration between COFO and the RFCs is also seen as a key element of effective work planning, which enables aligning agendas, identifying common items, and developing meeting calendars to allow for timely input to the Regional Conferences and to COFO.
7. The RFCs are increasingly recognized as important venues for considering regional realities, opportunities and challenges related to other forest-relevant fora, including the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), which discussed the opportunities offered by the RFCs at its 14th and 15th sessions. The UNSPF identifies RFCs as regional bodies that, together with other regional bodies, provide a crucial bridge between international policies and national actions.

¹ FAO. 2021. FAO Strategic Framework 2022-2031. Rome. 1. eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition, progressively ensuring a world in which people at all times have sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life; 2. elimination of poverty and the driving forward of economic and social progress for all, with increased food production, enhanced rural development and sustainable livelihoods; and, 3. sustainable management and utilization of natural resources, including land, water, air, climate and genetic resources for the benefit of present and future generations.

² COFO/2022/7.3

8. The Commission is invited to provide its recommendations for the agenda of the 27th Session of COFO, which will be held from 22 to 26 July 2024, in Rome, Italy, using the format presented in Annex 1. In doing so, the Commission may wish to consider similar recommendations of other RFCs and build synergies to the extent possible. To enhance coordination across the RFCs the Commission may also wish to invite FAO to immediately share its recommendations with the secretariats of the other RFCs and invite its Executive Committee to further enhance coordination through the COFO Steering Committee.

III. INPUT TO THE REGIONAL CONFERENCES

9. Noting that several untapped opportunities exist, the last three sessions of COFO paid particular attention to strengthening the role of the RFCs in regional policy dialogues and made several recommendations in this regard. At its 26th session, COFO stressed the need for the RFCs “to have a more policy-relevant role in the FAO Regional Conferences, and invited FAO to support further integration of important regional forest-related matters”.

10. Due to the increasing attention to forest issues in multiple contexts including, *inter alia*, agrifood systems transformation, poverty eradication, climate change, biodiversity, land degradation, and food insecurity, the RFCs have unique opportunities to bring forestry issues to the forefront of regional policy dialogues by making recommendations for the agenda of respective Regional Conferences.

11. The Commission may wish to use the table in Annex 2 for presenting its recommendations, and for the sake of coherence, also for informing other RFCs, of its recommendations, in a timely manner.

IV. INPUT TO FAO’S PROGRAMME OF WORK IN FORESTRY

12. In 2023, many RFCs meet for the first time under the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31 and this provides a unique opportunity for making recommendations built on the four better and the PPAs. Furthermore, the UNFF identified RFCs as “important partners in efforts to implement the strategic plan and achieve its global forest goals and targets”.

13. The Commission may wish to continue to pay attention to the feasibility of the work programme and identify priorities clearly, indicating also where priorities should change. While the identification of new priorities has proven very efficient and well-coordinated, there is room for further improvement in identifying areas of de-emphasis, especially when earlier work has achieved the expected objectives and should be terminated or continued as a lower priority, using the template presented in Annex 3.

B. FAO FORESTRY STRATEGIC PLANNING

INTRODUCTION

14. At its 26th session in 2022, the Committee on Forestry (COFO) discussed FAO’s work in forestry under the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31. The Committee noted with appreciation the accomplishments of FAO's work in forestry and endorsed the priority areas of work in forestry in 2022- 23 and beyond, and welcomed their strong alignment with the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31, as well as their contributions to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030 (UNSPF) Global Forest Goals. The Committee also encouraged FAO to “continue to pursue its reinvigorated business model, including through better interlinking technical and operational work, fostering partnerships, and strengthening responsiveness to Members’ needs and delivery at country level.”

15. The FAO Council, at its 171st Session in 2022, also endorsed the proposed priority areas of work in forestry and welcomed their strong alignment with the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31. It also requested FAO to actively continue to identify the important - and mutually beneficial - linkages between agriculture and forestry, and for scaling up related activities.

16. In response to this request, the FAO Forestry Division (NFO) has commenced a process to develop a new strategic framework document for FAO's work in forestry between 2024 and 2031. This framework aims to support the transformation of agrifood systems and maximize forestry's contribution to the 2030 Agenda, notably in the context of the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31 and the UNSPF2's Global Forest Goals.

17. The starting points for the new strategic framework for FAO's work in forestry are FAO's Basic Texts, FAO's vision and the three Global Goals of Members, which guide the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31. FAO's Strategic Framework seeks to support the 2030 Agenda through the transformation to "MORE efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems for better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life, leaving no one behind". These four *betters* comprise an organizing structure for the way in which FAO contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 1 (no poverty), SDG 2 (zero hunger) and SDG 10 (reduced inequalities). FAO implements the Strategic Framework through 20 Programme Priority Areas (PPAs), which articulate FAO's thematic, technical comparative advantage and competency to deliver, through its regular Medium-Term Plans and Plans of Work and Budget.

18. The intended framework for forestry will support a more harmonized and coherent programme of work on forestry across the PPAs. It will outline FAO's vision on and mission in forestry in the context of FAO's Strategic Framework and the Global Forest Goals. This includes specifying objectives and targets related to FAO forestry support to Members to achieving the SDGs and Global Forest Goals, including through FAO strategies, key corporate initiatives and actions.

19. The basis for the objectives and targets will be the four priority areas of FAO's work in forestry as endorsed by the FAO Committee on Forestry and FAO Council in 2022:

- i. Halting Deforestation and Enhancing Resilience
- ii. Mainstreaming Biodiversity and Restoring Forest Ecosystems
- iii. Enhancing Sustainable Production, Use and Livelihoods
- iv. Data, Statistics, Analytics

20. The framework for forestry will furthermore specify guiding principles and priority action areas as well as implementation arrangements and modalities to monitor and review progress. It will outline how FAO's "accelerators" and cross-cutting themes will be implemented in forestry programmatic interventions. It will also operationalize FAO's reinvigorated, fit-for-purpose business model in forestry, aiming to ensure an inclusive and agile Organization that is transparent, open, innovative, responsible, effective and impactful - and that serves its Members to achieve the *four betters*.

21. The framework for forestry is expected to be finalized for consideration by the 27th session of the Committee on Forestry to be held at FAO Headquarters in Rome next July 2024.



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Annex 1: NAFC recommendations for the attention of COFO (issues to be considered for preparations of the Agenda)

Priority issues for COFO to consider	Expected outcome (information/discussion/guidance)	Reference to other RFC's recommendation

Annex 2: NAFC recommendations for the attention of the Informal Regional Conference for North America (INARC)

Priority issues for the INARC to consider	Expected outcome (information/discussion/guidance)	Reference to other RC as appropriate

Annex 3: NAFC recommendations for the FAO Programme of Work in Forestry related to the agenda of the current Session

Area/ action for FAO programme of work	Priority (High, Medium, Low, De-emphasis)	Type (new, continued)	Level of action (sub-regional/ regional)	Reference to the relevant PPA	Reference to Global Forest Goals of UNSPF